

DICKERSON FAMILY



Dickerson

Harry

Service No: 1561



BASIC INFORMATION

Name: Harry Dickerson

Service Number: 1561

Date of Enlistment: 7/9/1915

Age at Enlistment: 21

Civil Occupation: Wood cutter

Medals, Honours, Awards:
1914/15 Star, British War
medal, Victory medal

Father: Unknown

Mother: Mary Dickerson

Siblings: Walter Joseph
Mortimer born 1874, Martha
Elizabeth Parker born 1876,

John Parker born 1878, Mary Anne Parker born 1881, George James
Dickenson born 1883, Margaret Dickenson born 1887, Fanny Eliza Skelton
born 1888 and Bertha Skelton born 1891.

Married: Sarah Margaret Coubrough

Children: Allan Edward Coubrough (adopted son) born 1917, Harry James
born 1921, John Reginald born 1922, William Walter born 1924, Shirley M
born 1927, Alexander born 1930 Northam, Raymond Kenneth born 1931,
Robert born circa 1934 and Harold Edward born circa 1937.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Harry Dickerson on the left, James King (Harry's brother in law) in the centre and Hubert Lawrence, Harry's nephew on the right.

Courtesy Australian War Memorial

FAMILY STORY

George Dickerson, an English settler, married Mary, an Aboriginal woman, in 1883. She brought four children from previous relationships to the marriage. The relationship was short, but Mary continued to use the name Dickerson on and off throughout her life, and she was living in York when Harry Dickerson was born, in 1894.

Harry worked as a wood cutter and was living with his sister and brother-in-law in Pickering Brook at the time of his enlistment.

LIFE STORY

Harry enlisted on the 7th September 1915 and, in November, was posted to the 12th Reinforcements/10th Light Horse. Harry's elder brother, James, had enlisted in the 10th Light Horse in October 1914 and had died of his wounds the week before his younger brother enlisted.

Harry disembarked in Egypt in February 1916. On the 12th November, after reporting sick, he was hospitalised at the 31st General Hospital. When discharged from hospital on the 4th December, Harry was Taken on Strength with the 3rd Light Horse Training Regiment that same day but, two days later, he was placed in an isolation camp at Moascar.

Discharged from the isolation camp on the 1st January 1917, Harry was then detached from the 3rd Light Horse Training Regiment to the Imperial School of Instruction on the 28th January, before returning to the Regiment on the 17th February, having qualified as a First Class Machine Gunner.

In early April of 1917, Harry was again detached to the Imperial School of Instruction in Zeitoun, Egypt, for training on the Hotchkiss Gun before passing the exam to become a Gunner on the 14th April. Four days' later, he was Taken on Strength with the 3rd Light Horse Brigade, 3rd Machine Gun Squadron. The 3rd Light Horse Brigade consisted of the 8th, 9th, 10th and, at times the 11th, Light Horse Regiments.

Harry served with the 3rd Light Horse Brigade, 3rd Machine Gun Squadron for the remainder of the Palestine campaign.

In 1918, as the war drew towards its end, Harry was briefly detached from his unit for three weeks to work in the provision of supplies at Damascus. He suffered some periods of illness, requiring hospital treatment and, in early March 1919, returned to his unit. In late October 1918, his designation of Gunner reverted to Trooper. Harry eventually returned to Australia, where he was discharged from the A.I.F. in September 1919.

Soon after returning, Harry married Sarah Margaret Coubrough on the 12th January 1920. Sarah had given birth to a son, Allan Coubrough, in 1917; he became the adopted son of Harry and used the surname Dickerson for the rest of his life. Sarah and Harry had eight more children between 1921 and 1937.



Harry began working for the West Australian Government Railways (W.A.G.R.) on the 16th September 1920 as a Goods Porter, then Shunter, at Perth Goods Yard. He did not remain long and spent some years working several odd jobs before being employed again by W.A.G.R. in a permanent position as a Porter in September 1927.

Transferred to Northam as a Shunter from 1928 to 1931, Harry returned to Perth as a Porter in March 1931.

Harry was injured in a workplace accident on the 6th February 1938. He lost 60% of his vision in his right eye and, as a result, the family fell on very hard times. Harry received 181 pounds, sixteen shillings and eight pence in compensation for his accident.

However, for a disabled man with eleven mouths to feed, times were tough. Harry's wife, Sarah, along with her sister, was convicted of two counts of stealing in early 1941, after she stole items they could then on-sell. Sarah's lawyer stated that, with their husbands on basic wages and having large families, poverty was a mitigating circumstance to be considered when the women were being sentenced. Sarah was held over on bond, and Harry stood as her bondsman.

The family moved several times over the next two to three decades, always residing in working class suburbs. His four sons, Allan, Harry, John and William all enlisted during World War Two, though William was discharged on the 13th January 1944, after a court martial, deemed him unsuitable for further military service.

Harry Dickerson died at Mount Henry Hospital on the 9th June 1969.



Harry Dickerson's Headstone
Courtesy Maureen Roberts

Dickerson

James

Service No: 392



BASIC INFORMATION

Name: James Dickerson

Date of Enlistment: 19/10/1914

Age at Enlistment: 31 Years

Civil Occupation: Labourer

Height: 5 Ft 6 ½ inches

Weight: 150 Lbs

Chest Measurement: 35 ½ inches

Complexion: Dark

Eyes: Dark Brown

Hair: Dark

Medals, Honours, Awards: 1914/15 Star, British War medal, Victory medal

Father: George Dickinson

Mother: Mary Dickerson

Siblings: Walter Joseph Mortimer born 1874,
Martha Elizabeth Parker born 1876, John Parker born 1878, Mary Anne
Parker born 1881, Margaret Dickenson born 1887, Fanny Eliza Skelton born
1888, Bertha Skelton born 1891 and Harry Dickerson born 1894.



Courtesy National Archives of Australia

LIFE STORY

George James Dickerson was born in Gingin in 1883 to Mary and George Dickerson. He later changed his name to just James Dickerson.

In 1887, James was living with his mother while she worked as a live-in servant for Alfred and Martha Skelton. When Alfred Skelton was charged with attempting to poison his wife, Mary gave evidence at the trial, stating that she was attending to her little boy at the time Alfred was accused of putting poison into his wife's ale (which was being warmed up on the stove). After Alfred was acquitted, he and Mary moved to York, where they lived together until his death in 1891.

In 1902, while James was working for York businessman, W. T. Craig, he was accused of being in unlawful possession of a horse. James appeared in the York Police Court but was acquitted after W. Craig gave evidence that he took James to Darkan for the express purpose of catching horses for him.

James competed at various athletic meets in York and Northam between 1905 and 1907, and won the District Handicap in 1905, representing York.

He had a few minor run-ins with the law before his enlistment. In 1904, James was charged with working a horse without the consent of the owner, Andrew Ghockson, but the charge was dismissed.

He was sued by A.V. Haines (a tailor in York) in 1910, admitting he had been able to pay the judgment summons but had drunk the money. James was sentenced to one month's imprisonment, to be suspended so long as he paid monthly instalments.

At the beginning of October 1914, a charge of being idle and disorderly was dismissed in the York Court.

After his enlistment on the 19th October 1914, James set sail from Fremantle bound for Egypt. On the 16th May 1915, serving in the 10th Light Horse Regiment, 3rd Light Horse Brigade, he embarked for Gallipoli.

The 10th Light Horse took part in the Battle of the Nek on the 7th August 1915. The casualty rate for that one day was forty percent but, luckily, James escaped injury.

His luck ran out on the 29th of the month when he was Wounded in Action.

James died on the 30th August 1915, aboard the Hospital Ship *Devanha* bound for better hospital facilities in Malta. He was buried at sea.

James' personal effects, an identity disc, a fountain pen and scissors, were returned to his mother, Mary, who was granted a pension of ten pounds per year on the 2nd November 1915.

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